# YOGA: ART OR SCIENCE

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IN this book[1] dedicated to Theosophy and entitled "Where Theosophy and Science Meet", it is truly important that Art should be included. Few realize that Art is a great and as yet unexplored field of Theosophy. To many, Theosophy is just a set of teachings. What are those teachings? Are they above and different from Science, Art, Philosophy, or Religion?

Theosophy, the white light shining above, on passing into the denseness of our world becomes the spectrum, embodying like a magnificent opal the whole range of colours. If one turns it this way it is Science, another way it becomes Art, it becomes Yoga, Music or Dance. One might almost say that Theosophy and Science do not meet because Theosophy

[1] "Where Theosophy and Science Meet," by D. D. Kanga, T. P. H., Adyar, Madras 20, India.

is Science and Science is Theosophy. For what is Science after all? In the world today the ordinary individual confuses the word Science with experimentation and discovery. The Great Plan exists, and man with his intelligence and capacity has touched a fringe of the Plan, from which has developed what we call Science, which has so far mainly concerned itself with the outermost workings of Nature's laws. Nature has shown portions of its plan to man, as he has begun to manipulate the body of Nature, which is matter. As man experiments, Nature reveals itself, and man is surprised at the power, the result, that he can produce. He directs these forces of Nature into various channels of activity and knowledge. This is great work indeed, and it satisfies the mind of man. His mind-body is stimulated; therefore it becomes more and more creative and the urge to create is satisfied. Satisfaction here is no static state, for the mind of the true scientist is at rest only in the continuous movement of creativeness.

Through Theosophy one learns, not the part which is now called Science, but the

whole which is the great Macrocosm, the life force in operation, with its universes, its laws, its order, its plan—all of which are represented in man, a complete being. This real Science which leads through knowledge of the operation of evolutionary forces to knowledge of the plan is Theosophy in its true form—Occultism. It is Occultism that lies behind all thought, all philosophy and all manifestation. It is this occult Science alone that will help us to understand the universe and man, Art and present-day Science. If we understand Occultism we begin to realise the nature of Yoga; for what is Yoga but true perception in the light of deep experience, the experience of body, mind and emotion? When there is complete attunement between the bodies of man and his innermost being, with a perfect understanding of all the functions of the great plan both within him and without, there is the true Yogi.

Theosophy as Occultism divides itself into three categories in the world of today and in its everyday expression:

(1) True Science—Resulting from the relationship of matter to a mind

which is tuned to a perception of Cosmic principle.

(2) True Art—Resulting from the relationship of matter to an emotion tuned to a perception of Cosmic principle.

(3) True Religion, which includes philosophy, common to both the above, not dealing with the Nature around us as Art and Science both do, but the Nature *within* us. Therefore its manifestation emphasises conduct, character, aspiration.

For the complete Man, the Yogi, these three are all aspects of the one great principle of life, and it is easy to see how all finally meet in one Consciousness. All three have to find the higher mind in order to discover Truth and Beauty. Really great Scientists, Artists, and Saints have all touched the same source. In the West the Scientist and the Artist often meet. It is a well-known fact that great mathematicians are generally musicians, though not always in practice. In the East this is equally true of today when the mind has turned to Science rather than to Religion.

But until lately it was the Artist and the Saint who met, for in the history of India one sees the land filled with the spirit of Religion as expressed through Art. Great Saints have expressed their Cosmic devotion through Music, Dance, and Poetry.

On the other hand, when man is expressing the lower emotion and the lesser self, then Science becomes desecrated by the dry mind that merely distracts from Truth, becomes cruel, practical and destructive. Then Art becomes sensual, vulgar and cruel through the lower emotion. Religion becomes an empty code of behaviour, narrow, superstitious and cruel, the antithesis of the highest Truth, Compassion.

Those great Beings who have achieved, like the Lord Buddha, Sri Krishna, Christ, Zarathushtra, Sankaracharya, and others, are therefore those who have become within themselves a living harmony of light, colour, sound and rhythm, thus becoming one with Nature, the mother of knowledge.

It is very easy to understand evolution by understanding these principles. Today the scientist, even without knowing it, is attaining

to cosmic Consciousness by applying his mind to the forces of nature. He wants to achieve a specific object in the material world, and must therefore learn its laws; and as he goes deeper into nature's laws his mind must become deeper and less personal. It is thus that he unconsciously moves toward Cosmic Consciousness. In the ancient days in the East, the Yogi or the great Scientist translated Cosmic Consciousness into mind language and also into the direct manipulation of the forces of nature, working consciously from the inside out, instead of unconsciously from the outside in.

Today, the artist is trying to express the urge toward Cosmic Consciousness, which is the real urge behind all creative effort, through the mind, and this is where modern civilization is retrograde, and why it is unable to produce truly great Art, Art which will outlive the civilization itself. The artist has lost his creative genius because he has lost his instrument, emotion. Art has not made as great progress today, because the whole aim of the Art, whether the artist knows it or not, is to attain cosmic consciousness

through sound, rhythm and form, as did Bach, Beethoven, Wagner, Leonardo da Vinci, Fra Angelico and others. In ancient India, the Yogi who was the great Artist brought Cosmic Beauty through the language of the heart in harmony with Nature in her manifold expressions of sound, rhythm, colour, line, and touch.

No wonder then that a great Yogi was the embodiment of all Knowledge and Beauty. The most marvellous example of this is Nataraja, who contains in Himself all forms of expression. He is the inspirer of Patanjali's Yoga Sastra. He is the inspirer of Bharata, the great Rishi who gave the gift of Dance and Music. Being an embodiment of emotion and mind, He, finally, above all, becomes the Compassionate One, the Essence of Oneness and Universality. He is the example to the world today of not only what an artist should be but what civilization should be. It is because mind and emotion at their highest are one consciousness that a great scientist and a great artist are so similar, both in depth of experience and in the quality of their being—unless they are of the lower order,

for the acknowledged great are not always great; nor are the truly great always acknowledged. In his high reaches the scientist touches Cosmic Emotion through Mind, while the artist reaches Cosmic Mind through Emotion. For the perfect balance of expression both are necessary to the world; but for the ordinary man Art is as necessary as daily bread, for only through the refining influence of Beauty is it possible for man to evolve. Emotion is more easily aroused and is a more normal expression than mind. It is through this that purity of body, of thought, of action, of motive, is born, for in the vast majority of mankind, it is emotion which rules the mind and directs action, whether consciously or subconsciously. Hence a great Artist is inevitably a Yogi who shows the way, a messenger who can make the savage feel that Heaven is as near to him as to the Gods.

Art gives the message of this Heaven to the mind, emotion and body. The true Yogi of Art brings the Plan into incarnation as form, rhythm, sound, colour. The unfolding of the white Light becomes pattern, geometry, design, as well as colour. The great painter

becomes one with this unfoldment and through his identity Divinity can express itself. Through his emotion and imagination he tries to portray the vast unlimited spaces, heights and depths, through the limitations of his material and the instrument of the hand. He moulds the universe in clay and marble. With his feet and body he expresses in movements of grace and rhythm the limitless beauty of the universe, the music of the spheres, the timing of events.

The Rishi Bharata says that the dance is the greatest of the arts, and through His Dance Shiva brought salvation to the world. What is the significance of this? It is that the human body, being the most evolved of physical manifestation, is in essence the perfect instrument of the Divine, and has all the potentialities of becoming such an instrument, for man has in himself the power to become the Divine. While this is true, there is no manifestation that is further away from Beauty than man without his own will, effort, and imagination. One can find Beauty in Nature, in the trees, in light, in the animals, because they have not yet parted from God in order to

become Gods. Man has done so, and his body is crude, coarse with passions and habits far removed from Nature, until he purifies it by refinement. Hence the Dance. The great rhythm releases in him the joy, the Beauty, the grace and harmony of cosmic life. In the training of the body, in the moulding of its movement into music made visible with music's life-giving gifts of beauty and rhythm, the physical matter which is the body transcends itself. The physical becomes non-physical, the earth on which he dances becomes a veritable heaven. With Mind and Emotion working through his body, he conquers space. One understands from this how the description of Shiva as Nataraja can speak of Him as dancing through space, representing Cosmic rhythm, how the worlds dance, and how the moon and the stars become his ornaments. The harmony of the Universe has become the joy of the body.

Dancing is considered in India to be complete Art, because it is an expression of the complete Man, a synthesis of all Arts. For from this physical Art comes the conquering and purification of body, emotion and mind.

It needs the accompaniment of all the five senses, which are the five windows of the soul, and of all the other Arts. So again you find in Nataraja yet another symbol, the Damaru (drum), representing rhythm and sound. From this is born another Art of Arts, Music.

While hands and feet are instruments of rhythm, the ear is the attuner of this rhythm to the soul, and therefore it craves for sound, melody, music by which to draw the soul into union with rhythm. Rhythm and movement, representing Time, seek union with harmony and melody, the manifestation of Eternity. Time represents the material of the body, while sound represents the soul, hence the union of rhythm and sound or dance and music is an at-one-ment with God. Therefore the ear is not merely a means of hearing but an instrument of the soul in receiving the sound coming from the Damaru of Nataraja, the Cosmic Dancer. It is said that the first-born of the five senses is the power to hear. To me it is as if on the day of the birth of the child, he is sent out from the heaven world blind, unable to speak, to think, or to

move about; but as a compensation he is told, there will be one tiny fragment of Heaven he will not lose when he is born, and that is the power to hear. Who knows but each child is born with the sound of heavenly music in his ears?

Music is the direct channel between Heaven and the heart. Of course essentially all Art and all expression is centred in the heart. As the earth and body are the materials for the dancer, so are emotion and sound the vehicles of music, for music is the dance of the emotional body. To understand pure music needs as great concentration of the bodies as to understand the dance. Great musicians have conquered space, time, and all forms of human experience through music, for which the finest instrument is the human body. It is interesting to see how the human body is built as an instrument for the Dancer, the Musician and the Yogi alike, how even in physical training there is similarity between the three. The Yogi is told that in deep meditation posture is of extreme importance, the spine being the rod of power connecting the human with the Divine. It is said that

the Indian instrument, the veena, is a reflection of the reality of a perfect body, but to us the veena is a symbol before our eyes of the way the spine is the instrument of power, the symbol of harmony between earth and Heaven. The Yogi takes earth through his meditation and unites it with Heaven. In the same way the spine is the instrument of sound for the Musician—even physically. The Musician has to understand posture and the use of the different ways of breathing and sources of resonance connected with the position of the spine. In this way the Yogi as the Musician takes the earthiness of his emotions and unites with it the Heaven of all-pervading universal Sound. When this happens, for all who can understand as well as for the one who creates, there is born a joy indescribable and an experience of unity with the divine which alone gives contentment; for during the experience of hearing pure music, we forget ourselves and therefore we are in our natural element of being, Gods. Humanity being fundamentally ruled by emotion, the purification, the stimulation and the direction of

emotion is essential, as it is obvious that the right direction of emotion results in the happiness of all creatures through the establishment of brotherhood between all creatures. It is only through the right direction of emotion that a Buddha or a Christ or Krishna is born. These great Beings are not only the Yogis of Music but are its results, physical embodiments of pure emotion, the highest Music.

As dance is the conquering of the body, so is music the conquering of the emotions. To transcend both is Yoga, the sound that is physical, calling to the Eternal Self in all. This shows that Art is not a mere expression, or an entertainment, but a Power which can both destroy and build. This is why music in particular is used in every form of worship, in every religion, in every temple. Music is used for war, for death or victory, love and devotion. It removes fatigue for the labourer, gives joy to the suffering, gives energy to the warrior and the highest flights of inspiration to the devotee. In India, the land that has above all emphasized spirituality, music was used by every saint, philosopher,

and artist, for each knew that it is possible through music to lift the consciousness of an individual to the level of one's intensest meditation. Sound and rhythm are vibrations, they are power. This power can be misused as well as used; passion also can be aroused through music, as is too often the case in the world to-day. Sensuality can be strengthened through the dance, for the lower passions expressed through the exhibition of the body itself are a potent instrument of evil. It is well known of course that music is used for the stirring up of the lower passions. Hence the need for the Occultist to understand this force and lead the world by this most direct of means, Art.

Hence the necessity for character as essential to the artist, for without it there is no will to direct the Art-Force along lines of transcendence. Here again we have the beautiful symbology of Shiva as the Yogi, the Compassionate and Benevolent One, who wears the ashes of the cremation ground on His body. He is the destroyer because He has burnt to ashes Kama—the desire-love. By His Benevolence, He danced, He played

the Damaru, from which came the first sound, the sacred word and the Vedas, the source of true Music. Therefore Music and Dance, as well as all the Arts, have their source in One. Truly, Music is a gift of the Gods, for in it are Science, Mathematics, Beauty and Harmony. In it is the Veda, the Dance. Since Art is a Divine force that lifts the crude vibrations of the lower matter, since Art is Harmony, it has yet another power, the power of bringing earth and Heaven together, for through it alone can two evolutions come together, the human and the Angelic. It is because of this that the Seers of the world have understood the value of Art, not only in everyday life, but in ritual, in temples, and in the teaching of all Truths.

The Science of the Soul and the Science of living are one and the same. True Science is the knowledge of Power and the true Yogi is one who knows how to wield it. The symbology of Shiva is indeed a perfect one, but it is not only a Hindu symbol or an exterior symbol. Each one of us is Shiva in as much as we understand the principle, whatever may be the name we give it. He is the sum, and

more, of all the capacities of all human beings in all directions, for He is their source, their growth, and their perfection. A human dancer uses arms and legs as He does, a poet and a musician use voice and instrument, an actor uses costume and ornament of gold studded with gems. But in reality, if the Spirit is the Master of Forms, then the artist is at one with Him—it is He who dances, He who sings and plays, He who is thus described :

" We bow to Him the benevolent One whose limbs are the Worlds, whose song and poetry are the essence of all language, whose costume is the moon and the stars."

In essence true Art is the mediator between Spirituality and everyday life. Though there are few artists who show forth this great truth, still the world is blessed in these few and in the very creation of Art, which can be such a mighty force for the salvation of the world.

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